

TOWN OF AMHERST

# STATE OF THE TOWN

2020



# Speakers



**LYNN GRIESEMER**  
Amherst Council President



**PAUL BOCKELMAN**  
Town Manager



**ALLISON MCDONALD**  
School Committee Chair



**AUSTIN SARAT**  
Library Trustees President

# Lynn Griesemer

**PRESIDENT, AMHERST TOWN COUNCIL**

## CHARTER SECTION 2.2

State of the Town Address: Each year the Town Council President and the Town Manager shall address the elected bodies, officers of the Town, and the public on the state of affairs of the Town





# Town Council

**At Large Councilors:** Alisa Brewer,  
Mandi Jo Hanneke, & Andy Steinberg.

**District 1:** Cathy Schoen and Sarah Swartz

**District 2:** Pat De Angelis and Lynn Griesemer

**District 3:** Dorothy Pam and George Ryan

**District 4:** Evan Ross and Steve Schreiber.

**District 5:** Shalini Bahl-Milne and Darcy Dumont



# Fulfilling the Requirements of the Charter



- Master Plan
- Public Forums
- District Meetings
- Council Meetings (44 total; 37 Virtually)
- Council Committees (4) and JCPC
- Liaison to Town Committees



# ADDITIONAL COUNCILOR RESPONSIBILITIES

## Communication with Individual Residents



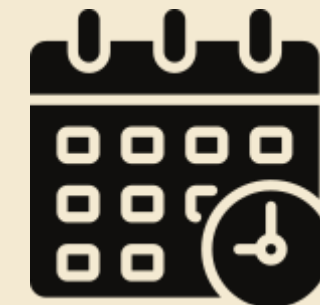
## Public Events



## Proclamations & Resolutions



## Attend Meetings of other Organizations



The background of the slide is a photograph of a town street. On the left, there is a multi-story brick building with many windows. In the foreground on the right, there are large, vibrant red flowers, possibly geraniums, in bloom. The sky is blue with some light clouds. The overall scene is a typical town street during the day.

TOWN OF AMHERST

# COUNCIL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2020

# Bylaws



## PASSAGE OF BYLAWS

- Percent for Art
- Wage and Tip Theft Bylaw
- Responsible Employer: Public Construction Contracts and Agreements for Tax Relief Bylaw
- Prohibiting the Use of Wild and Exotic Animals in Traveling Shows and Circuses

## AMENDED THE OPEN CONTAINER, SINGLE USE OF PLASTIC BAGS, AND NOISE VIOLATIONS BYLAWS



# Support to Local Businesses including Farmers



- Temporary Zoning Amendment
- Temporary Change to the Public Way Policy
- Plan for the Farmer's Market
- Public Way Requests

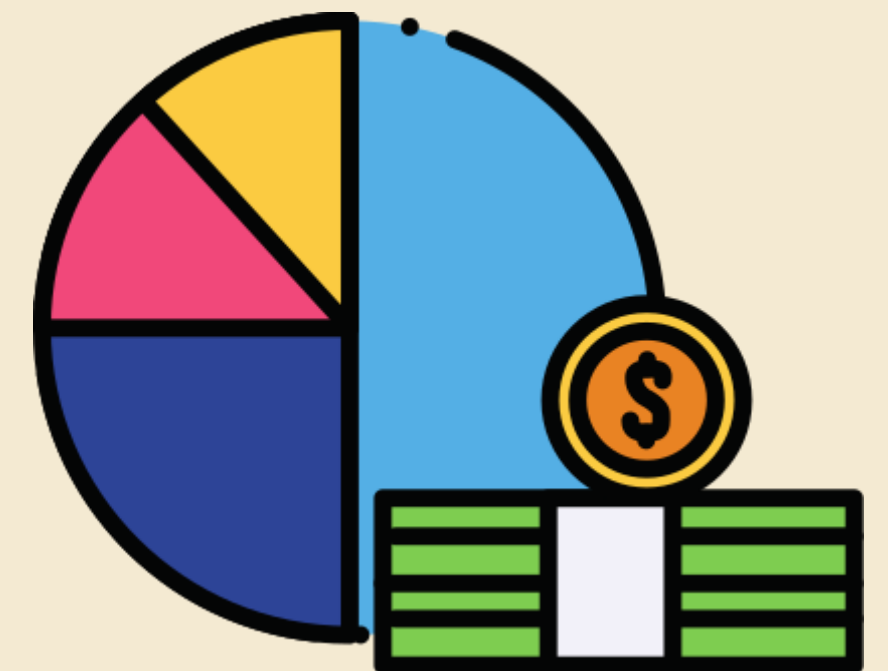
# Sound Financial Guidance

**1** **Operating Budgets**  
1/12th and Full Year

**3** **Capital Expenditures**

**2** **Reserves**

**4** **Audit**



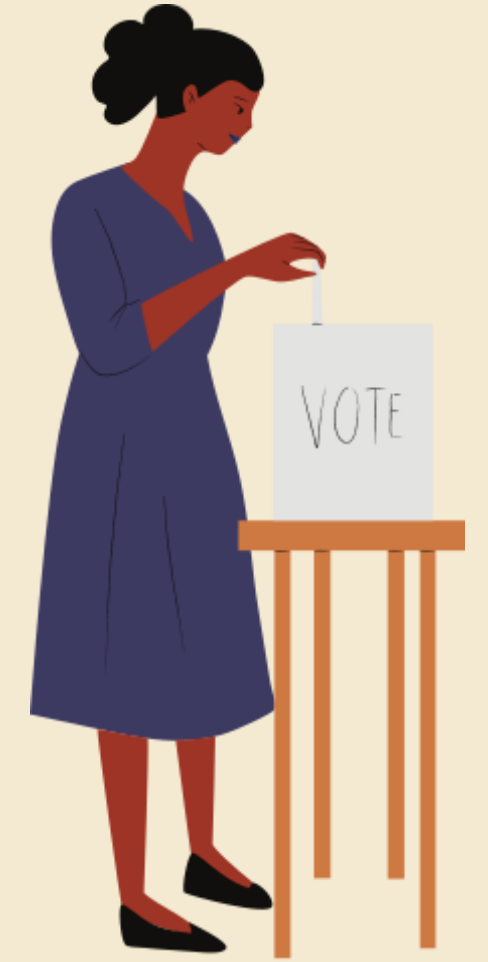


# Capital & Housing

- Elementary School Building
- North Amherst Library
- Recreation
  - Dog Park
  - Groff Park
  - Kendrick Park
- Affordable studio apartments at 132 Northampton Rd.

# Ensured Safe Access to Election Polls

- Maintain 7 district based polling sites
- Utilized the High Schools for 3 sites
- Accurate and free of fraud





# The Future and Our Challenges

- Addressing Community Safety, Racial Equity and Social Justice
- Identifying a path forward for our four major capital Investments
- Adopting a Climate Action Plan to help us reach our goals
- Supporting the Economic Recovery and Vitality of Amherst
- Reviewing and revising our Zoning Bylaws
- Other pending bylaws on water, sewer, surveillance technology and facial recognition
- Adopting a Comprehensive Housing Plan
- Continuing to pass responsible Capital and Operating Budget
- Councilors job more manageable



# Sincere Appreciation

- Town Manager & Staff
- Clerk of the Town Council
- Town Committees & the Residents who serve the Town
- Amherst Media
- Residents





# Paul Bockelman

**AMHERST TOWN MANAGER**

## CHARTER SECTION 2.2

State of the Town Address: Each year the Town Council President and the Town Manager shall address the elected bodies, officers of the Town, and the public on the state of affairs of the Town



# Pandemic

## DEFINITION:

- an outbreak of a disease that occurs over a wide geographic area (such as multiple countries or continents) and typically affects a significant proportion of the population





# COVID-19 Pandemic

- Covid Response (CoRe) Team



- David Ziomek, Assistant Town Manager
- Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of Public Works
- Tim Nelson, Fire Chief/Emergency Management Director
- Scott Livingstone, Police Chief/Dispatch
- Sonia Aldrich, Comptroller
- Julie Federman...Emma Dragon, Public Health Director



TOWN OF AMHERST

# COVID INITIATIVES

2020



# COVID-19 INITIATIVES: STAFF WORK

- COVID HOTLINE
- AMBASSADOR PROGRAM
- LIBRARY, SENIOR CENTER, RECREATION INNOVATIONS
- PUBLIC MEETINGS TO ZOOM
- WEEKLY COMMUNITY CHATS

- COVID-19 WEB PAGE
- FREE MASKS FOR ALL
- PARKING ENFORCEMENT
- DELIVERING MEALS
- PLEXI GLASS AND CREATIVE USE OF MEETING ROOMS
- ZONING BYLAW

- IT EQUIPMENT ACQUISITION
- DPW RECONFIGURED DOWNTOWN STREETS
- FY21 & ONE MONTH BUDGET
- FINANCE TEAM ENSURED BILLS WERE PAID & EMPLOYEES WERE PAID
- TOWN CLERK CONTINUED OPERATIONS

- CREATIVE LIBRARY PROGRAMS
- STAFF PIVOTED TO TAKE ON NEW DUTIES AT CHERRY HILL & PUFFERS
- EXPANDED INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY OPTIONS
- & MORE!







# COVID-19 INITIATIVES: SUPPORT

- Cooling tent during the summer operated by staff of Craigs Doors
- Emergency rental assistance program
- Social worker for those impacted by Covid
- Outdoor dining retrofits – barricades, heaters, tables
- Public way changes for restaurants
- Meal offerings for those affected by Covid in partnership with restaurants
- Farmers Market Move to Town Common

# COVID-19 INITIATIVES: POLICIES

- Delaying of deadline for paying bills
- Waiving of parking enforcement
- Reducing liquor license fees
- Adding five additional firefighters
- Improving municipal buildings such as adding Plexiglas & dividers and improving HVAC
- Distributing the workforce to remote and other locations in the buildings



TOWN OF AMHERST

# GRANT AWARDS

2020



# GRANT AWARDS IN 2020

## A PARTIAL LISTING...

- DEP Recycling Dividends
- DOT Small Bridge Program
- EPA/MA DEP Nonpoint Source Solution
- Shared Streets and Spaces
- MassWorks
- Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program
- PARC Grant
- Community Development Block Grant
- CDBG-CARES Funding
- Emergency Rental Assistance
- Census Complete Count Grant
- Housing Choice Community Designation
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action Grant
- Eversource Grants
- West Street Pump Station VFD Upgrade
- Main Street Pump Station VFD Upgrade
- Olympia Drive Street Light Upgrade
- Wastewater Treatment Plant Lighting Upgrade
- Complete Count Census Grant
- Center for Tech & Civic Life COVID-19 Response Grant
- Virtual Programming for Distance Learning Grant
- MA Humanities CARES Act Grant
- Amherst Cultural Council Grant
- Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness Grant
- Senior Community Service Employment Program
- Cooley Dickinson Hospital Healthy Communities Older Adult Project
- Safe Election Grant
- COVID 19 Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant



TOWN OF AMHERST

# FINANCES

2020



# Finances: Accomplishments

## MANAGED FY20 BUDGET SUCCESSFULLY

No additional appropriation was needed to balance FY20 budget

## DISCIPLINED ABOUT GROWING RESERVES & REDUCING DEBT

Reserves are \$16.5 million as of July 1, 2020 (19.7% of the operating budget)

## ADOPTED & IMPLEMENTED FY21 BUDGET

No reserves were needed to balance FY21 budget

## STABLIZED HEALTH INSURANCE



# Finances: Challenges

- High degree of uncertainty (pandemic, colleges and university, speed of economic recovery)
- Support for residents (health, housing, food, services)
- Support for local businesses
- Decline in local revenues, water/sewer enterprise funds
- End of CARES Act funding
- Uncertain State Aid
- Need for capital investment



# Finances: Fundamentals

- Excellent fiscal management and forward-looking planning
- Strong financial systems
  - High degree of adaptability
- Strong working relationships
  - Strong collaboration among elected officials and staff (Library, Schools, and Town)
- Steady, managed growth





TOWN OF AMHERST

THANK YOU!

2020



# AMHERST SCHOOLS

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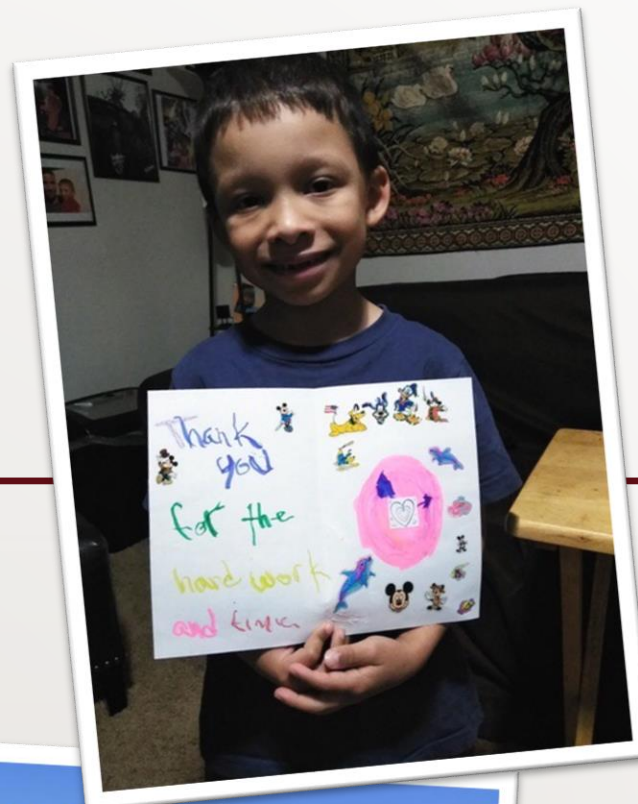
STATE OF THE TOWN

DECEMBER 7, 2020

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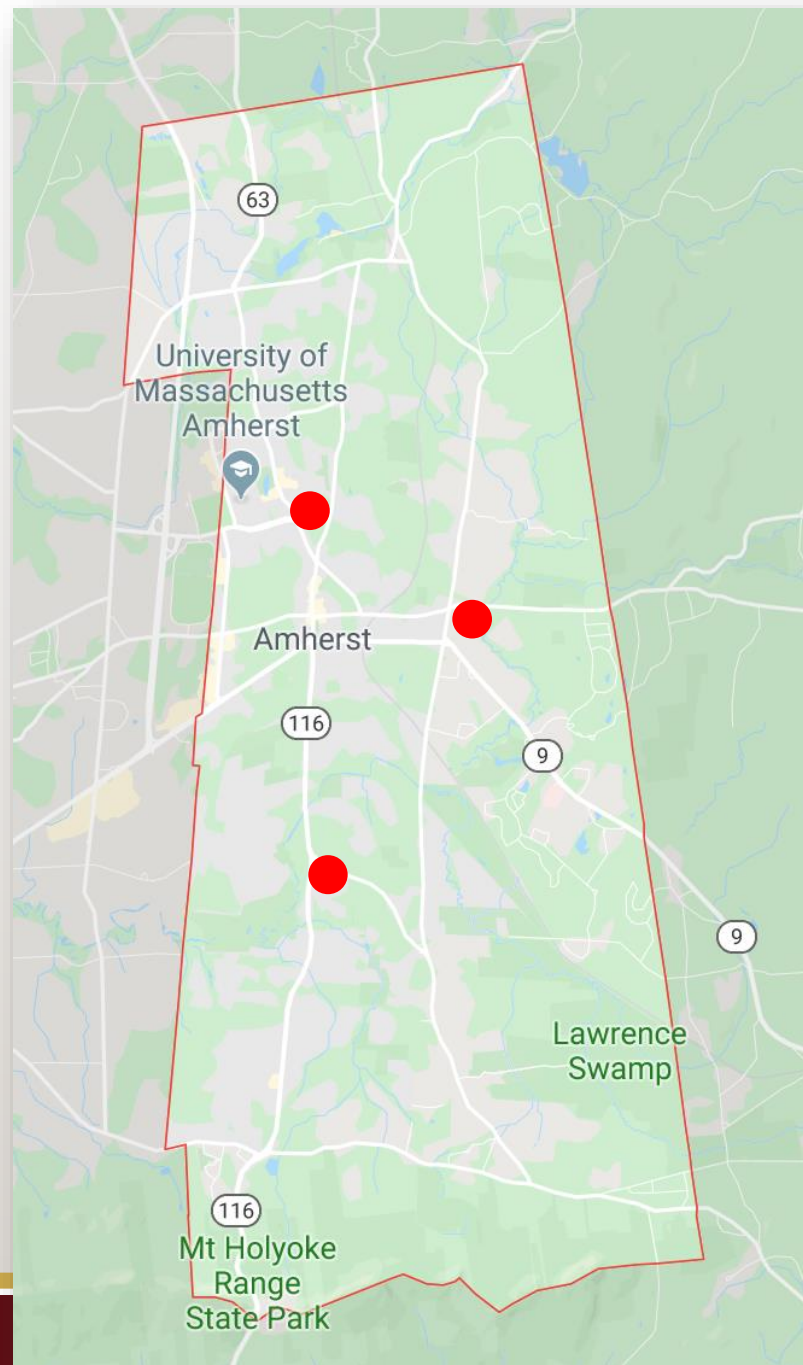


# WHO WE ARE





# AMHERST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL & BUDGET FACTS



- Three elementary schools with **997** students in grades K-6:
  - Crocker Farm: 323 students
  - Fort River: 306 students
  - Wildwood: 368 students
  - *Plus Pre-K at Crocker Farm: 32 students*
- Student population is highly diverse: 51% of students are BIPOC
- Half of students are High Needs\*, including:
  - 34% economically disadvantaged
  - 22% with disabilities
- FY2021 budget: \$23.9MM

\* Defined by the state Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, “high needs” includes students who are “either low income (prior to School Year 2015), economically disadvantaged (starting in School Year 2015), or ELL, or former ELL, or a student with disabilities.”

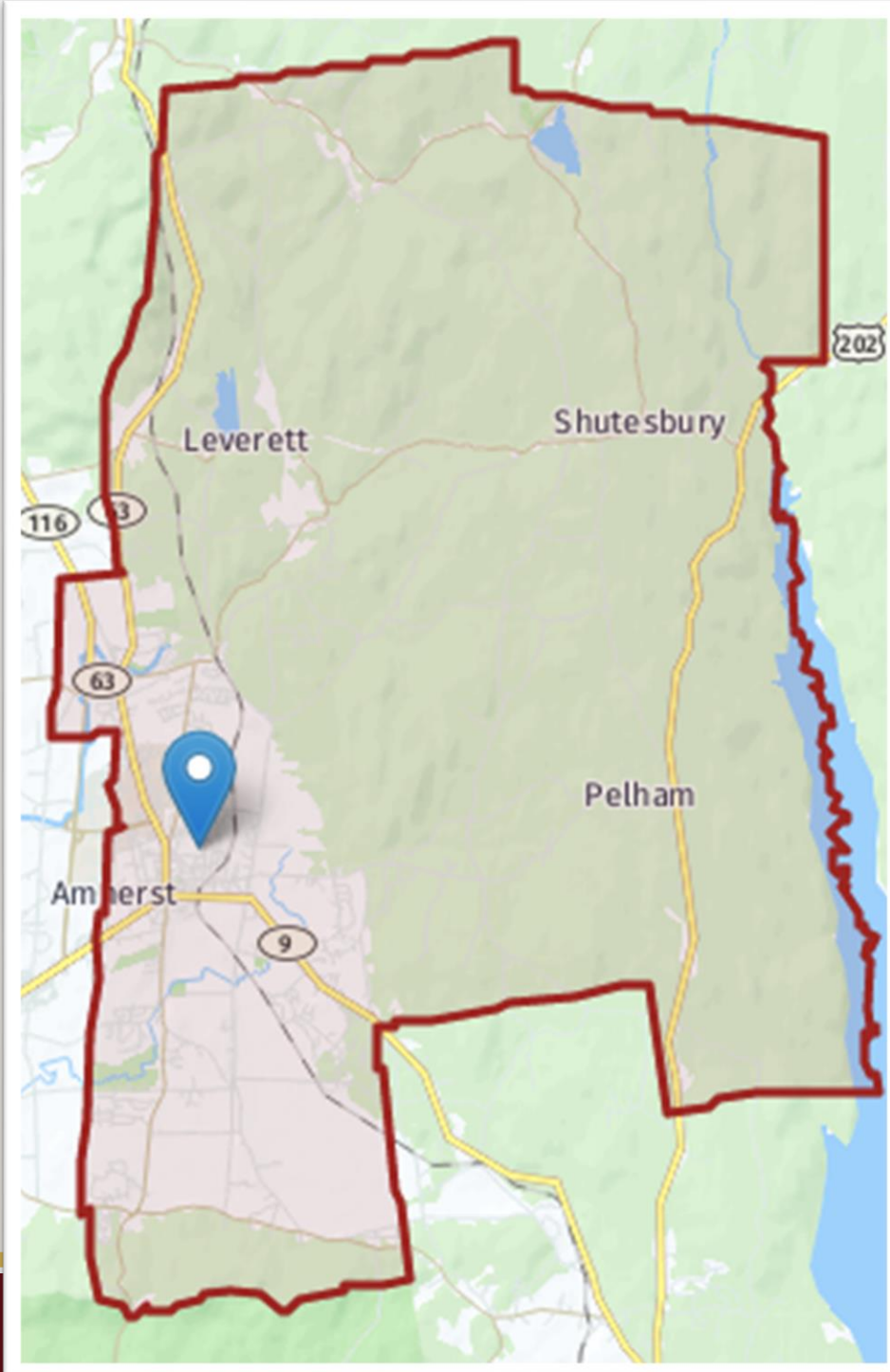
# ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OVERVIEW

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- Excellent statewide reputation, thanks to the work of our educators, administrators, and staff in partnership with students, parents, and caregivers
- District consistently meeting state progress and accountability goals, though persistent gaps remain among high needs students and some other groups
- Art, music, and technology education offered both through 'Specials' and integration in Unit Studies.
- Low average class sizes to promote learning and low student/teacher ratio of 9:1 (State average 12.6:1)



# REGIONAL SCHOOL & BUDGET FACTS



- Two secondary schools serving **1,283** grade 7-12 students from 4 towns.
  - Amherst Regional Middle School (ARMS): 413 students
  - Amherst Regional High School (ARHS): 870 students
- Student population is highly diverse: 45% of students are BIPOC
- 44% of students are High Needs, including:
  - 30% economically disadvantaged
  - 22% with disabilities
- FY2021 budget: \$32.1MM

# REGIONAL SCHOOLS OVERVIEW

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- Excellent reputation and dedicated, high-quality educators, staff, and administrators
- Strong community and school programs – Family Center, BRYT Program, Restorative Practices
- Average class sizes that promote learning (Student:Teacher ratio 12:1)
- High-quality in-district specialized programs
- Wide array of electives, clubs, and sports:
  - 40+ afterschool clubs
  - 50 athletic teams

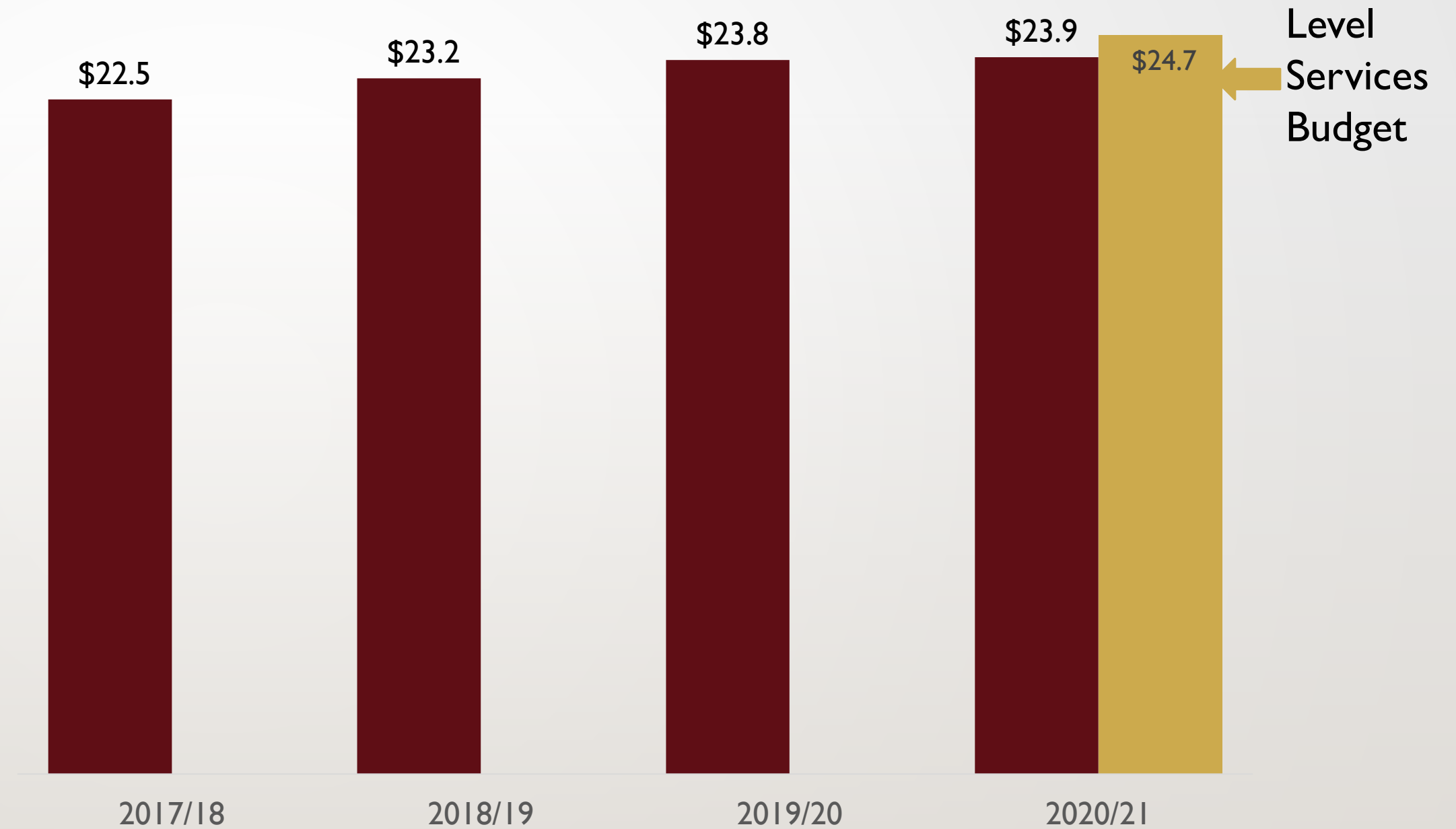


# ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS BUDGET

Original FY2021 Budget of \$24.5MM included net reduction of (\$155K) to the \$24.7MM Level Services Budget.

Final Budget reduced (\$580K) with COVID adjustments.

Repeated Level Funding means permanent cuts to Level Services.

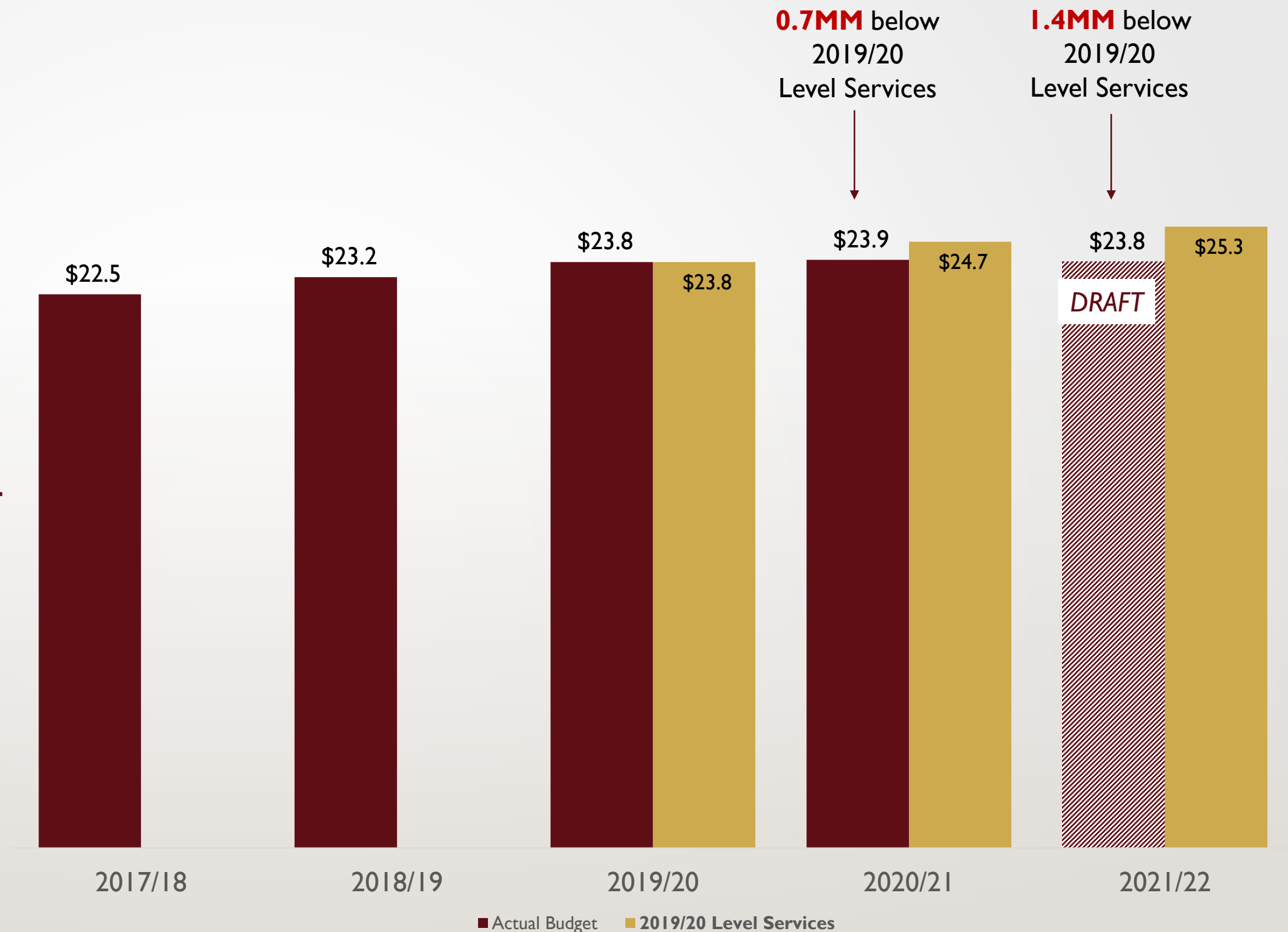


# ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS BUDGET

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Budget/Actuals \$MM;

2021/22 Budget draft from November 7, 2020 Financial Indicators Presentation, Level Services estimated 2.5% increase vs. 2020/21.

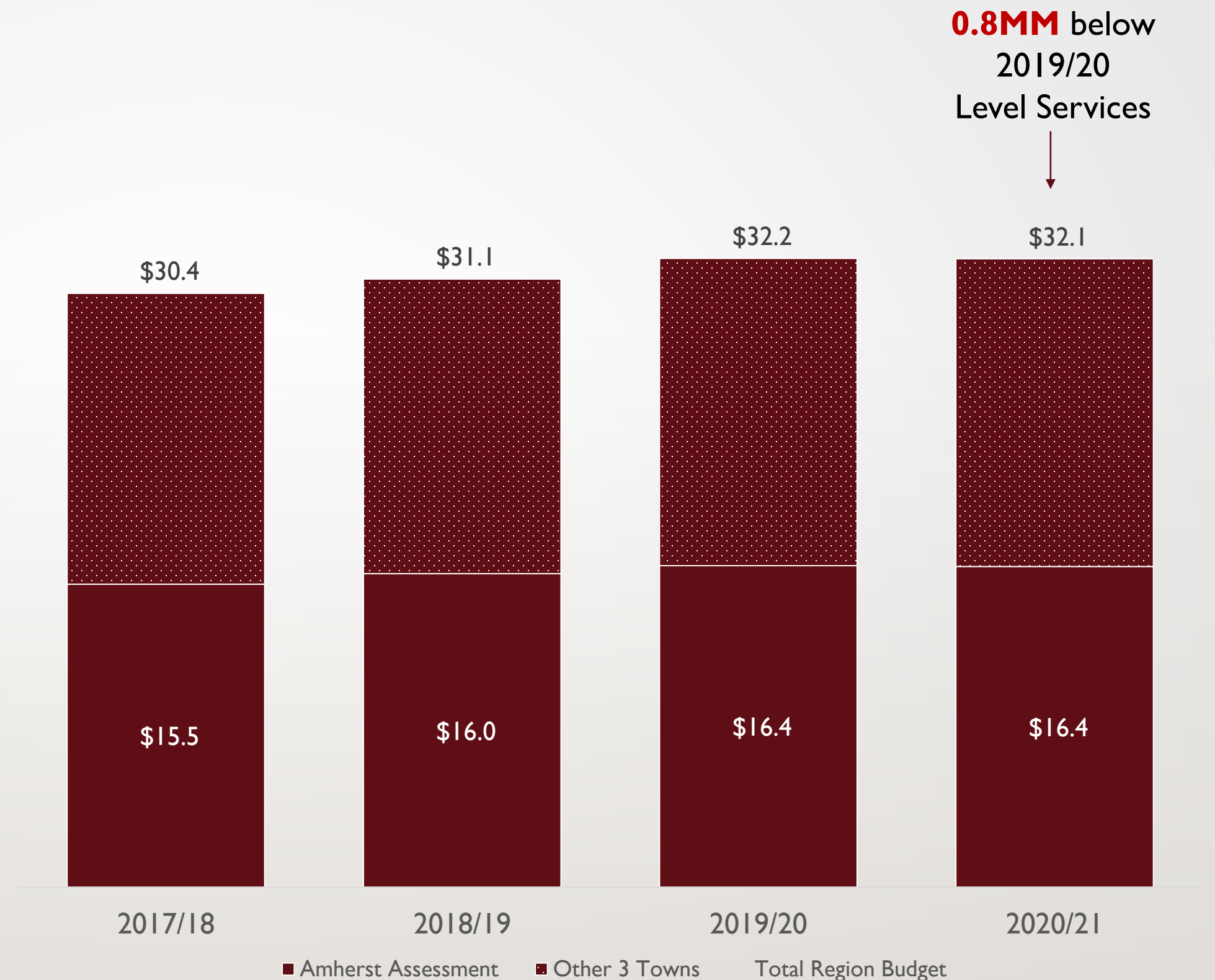


# REGIONAL SCHOOLS BUDGET

Original FY2021 Budget of \$32.7MM included net reduction of (\$322K) to the \$33.0MM Level Services Budget.

Final Budget reduced additional (\$516K) with COVID adjustments.

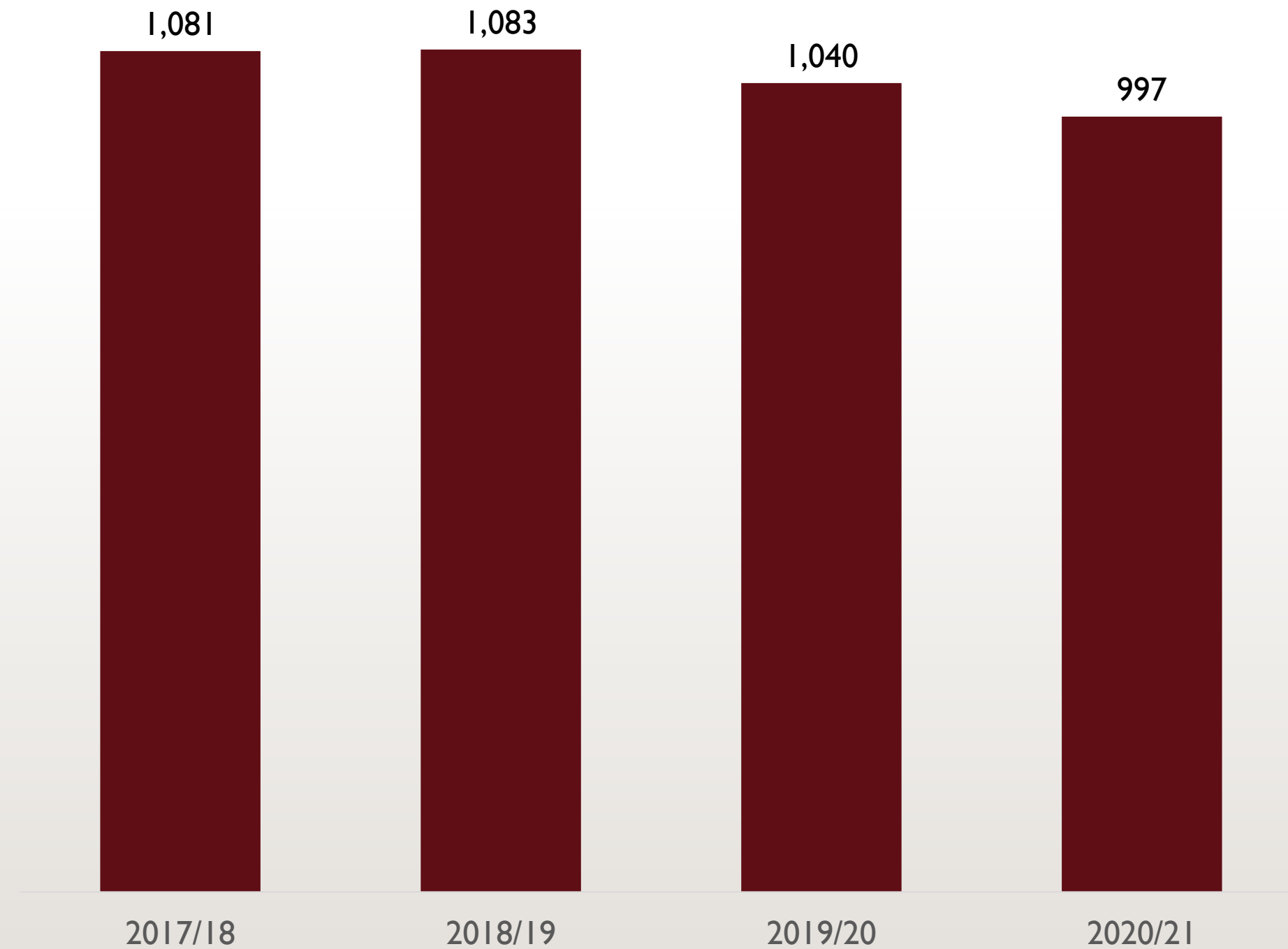
Level Funding in 2021/22 would be (\$1.7MM) below 2019/20 Level Services and would mean permanent cuts to Level Services.



Budget/Actuals \$MM,.

# ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS STUDENT ENROLLMENT

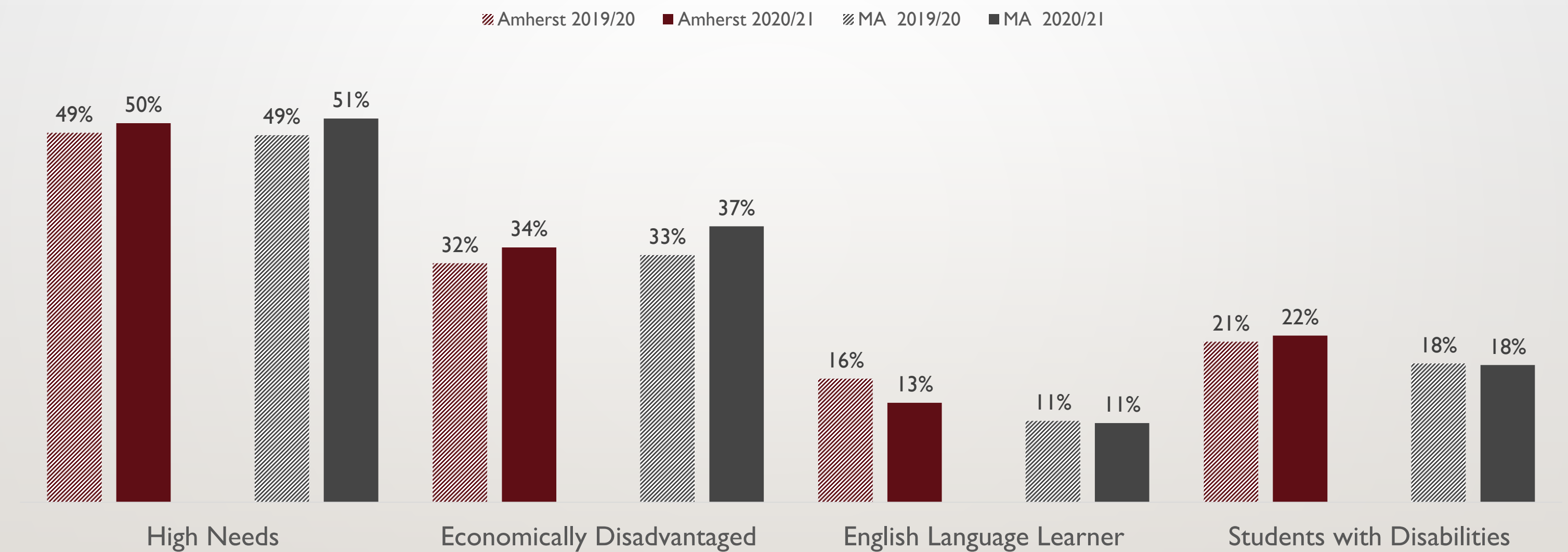
Total K-6 students enrolled at  
Amherst Elementary Schools.





# STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

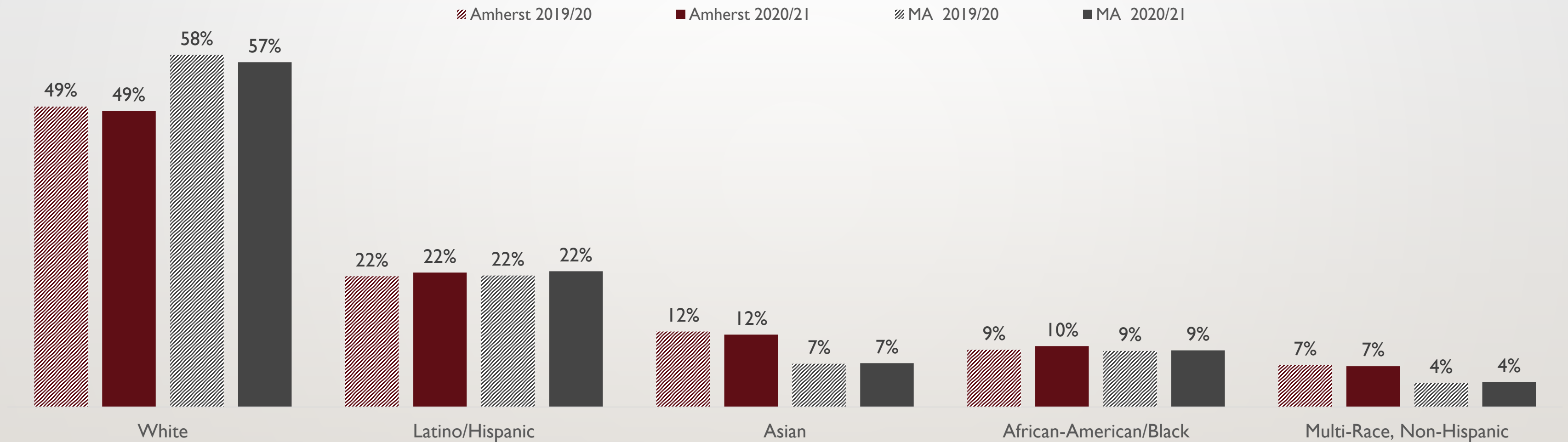
## (AMHERST ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS)



Source: DESE School and District Profiles (<https://profiles.doe.mass.edu>)

# STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

## (AMHERST ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS)

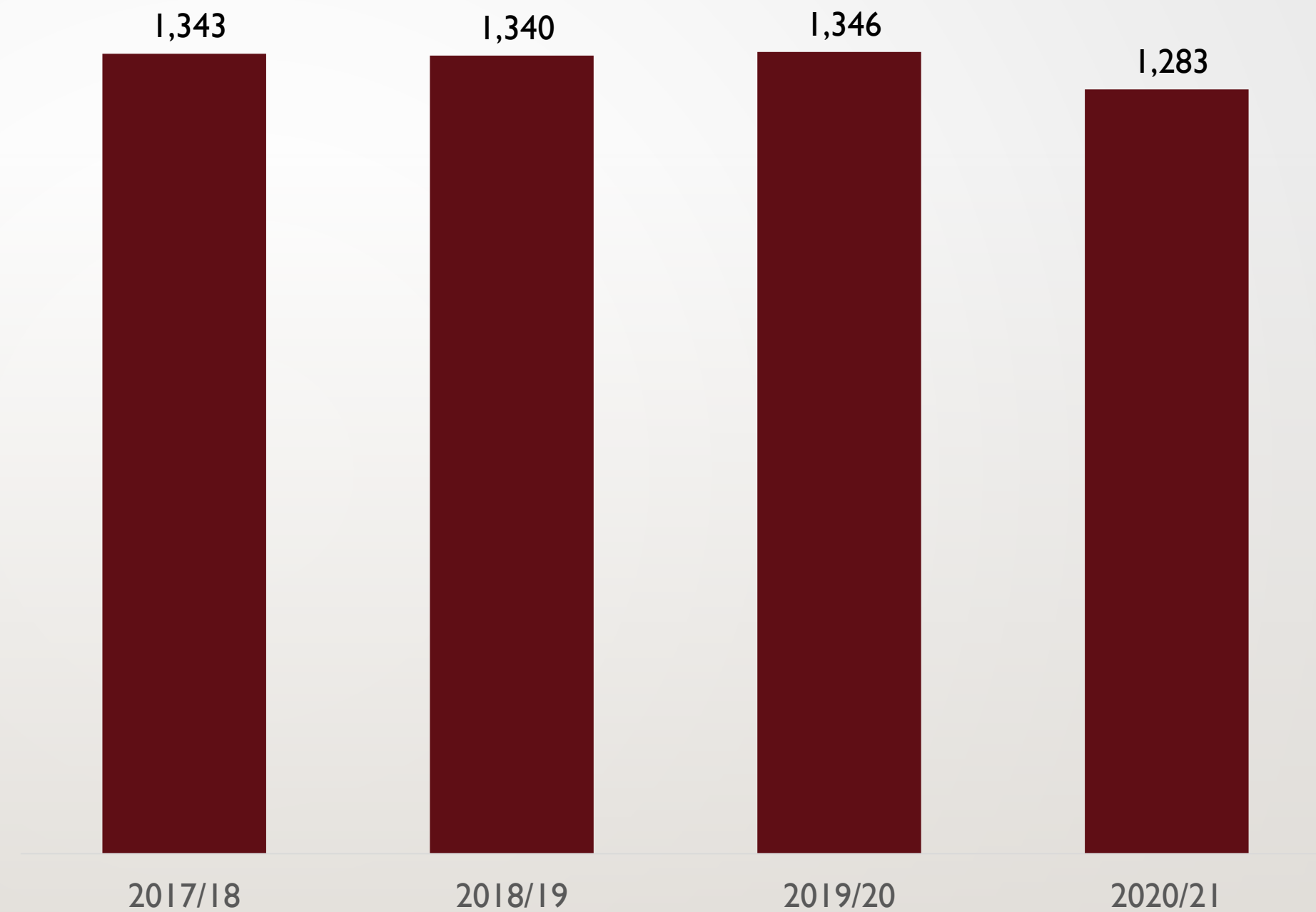


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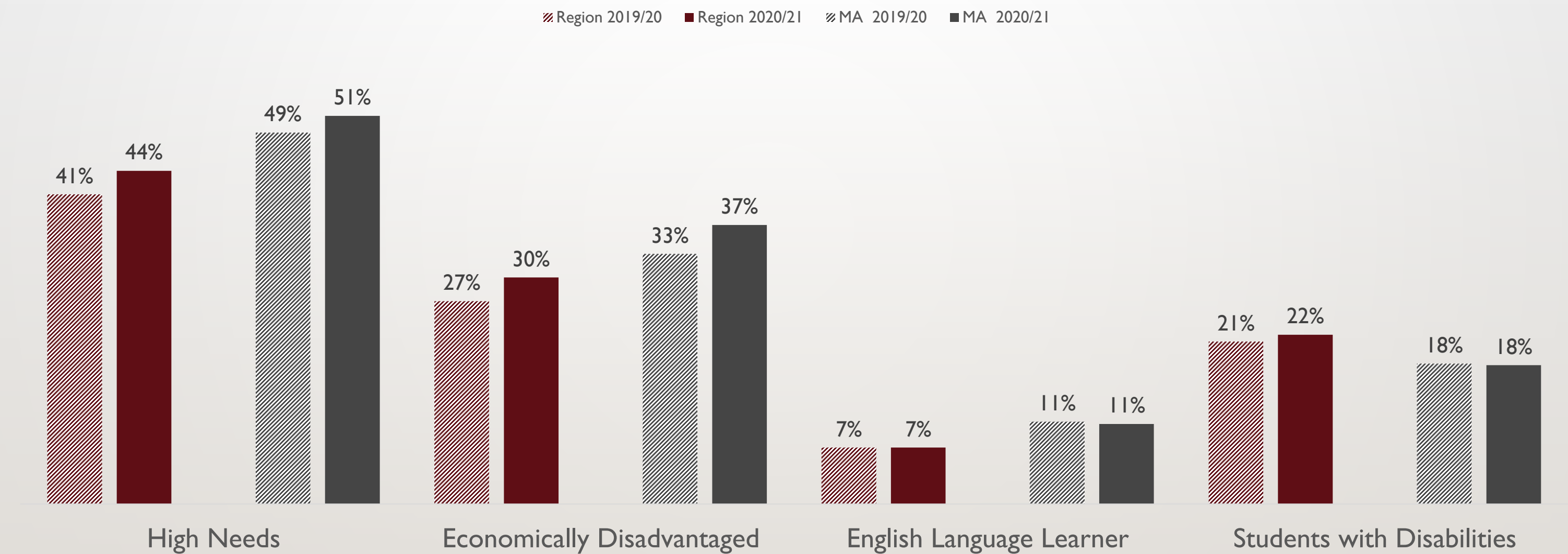
# REGIONAL SCHOOLS STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Total Grades 7-12 students enrolled  
at Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools.



# STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

## (REGIONAL SCHOOLS)

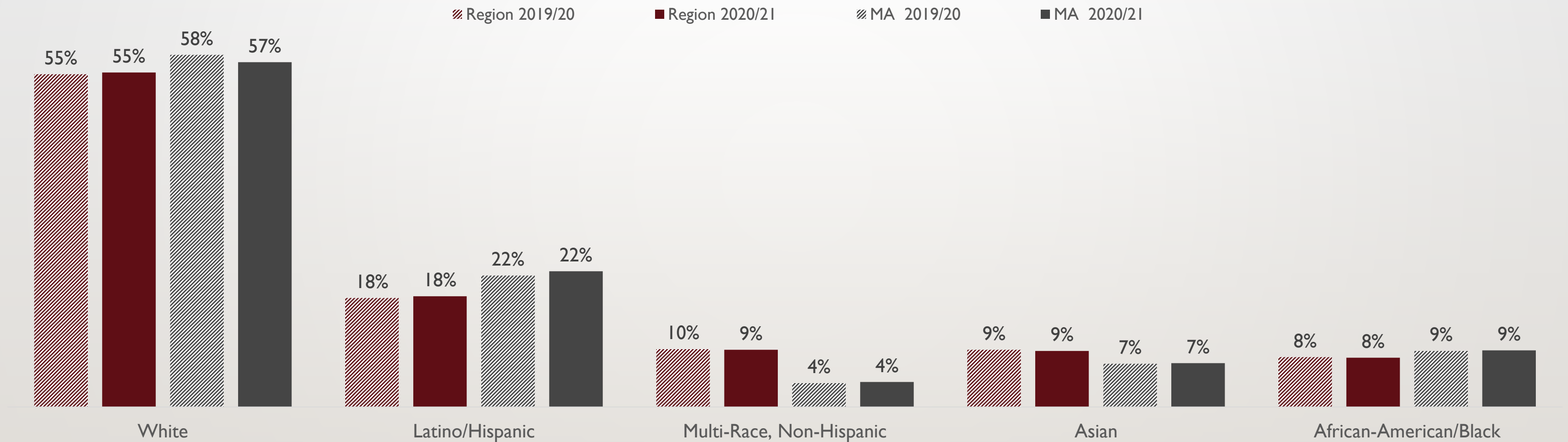


Source: DESE School and District Profiles (<https://profiles.doe.mass.edu>)



# STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

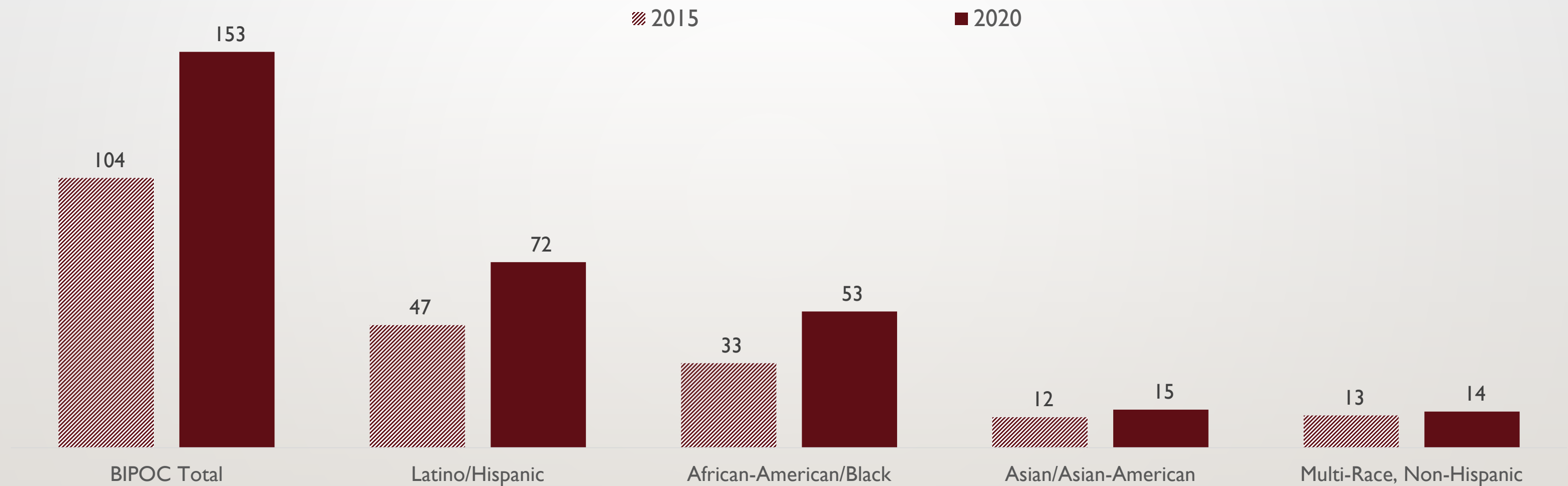
## (REGIONAL SCHOOLS)



Source: DESE School and District Profiles (<https://profiles.doe.mass.edu>)

# STAFF DEMOGRAPHICS (AMHERST + REGION)

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Source: DESE School and District Profiles (<https://profiles.doe.mass.edu>)



# KEY INITIATIVES & CHALLENGES

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## **Pandemic Learning Plan:**

Developed robust plan that prioritized in-person learning; unclear when students will return to buildings.

Increased support needed in FY2022 to address learning loss and academic deficits exacerbated by extended period of distance learning.



## **School Buildings:**

Accepted into MSBA program to support a new elementary school building to replace Fort River and Wildwood schools.

Will face space challenges at FR and WW with resumption of full in-person learning due to COVID alterations.



## **Budget:**

Significant budget pressure in FY2021 following cuts to meet level-funding and increased expenses due to COVID.

Will face further pressure in FY2022 due to increased needs and decreased funding.



## **Dual Language Program:**

Highly successful first year of *Caminantes* at Fort River; 37 kindergarten students, nearly 50 percent have Spanish language background.

Expanded in 20/21 to 36 K and 38 1<sup>st</sup> grade students.

# ADDITIONAL GOALS

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## **Social & Emotional Well-being:**

Support students and staff social-emotional wellness with particular focus on needs connected to pandemic, racial injustice, and economic crises, including the implementation of anti-racism curriculum.



## **Post-Pandemic Education:**

Reflect on learnings and impact of changes made due to COVID and explore integrating into educational plan as pandemic restrictions are lifted.



## **Teacher & Staff Diversity:**

Significant progress made in expanding and retaining diverse teachers and staff; won \$110K grant to fund continued efforts to diversify District teaching staff.



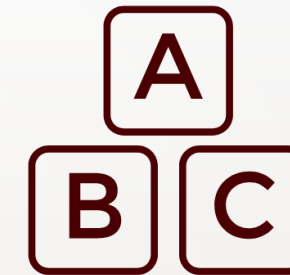
# ADDITIONAL GOALS

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## **Middle Grade Education:**

Complete the study on the viability and implications of moving 6<sup>th</sup> grade to ARMS and engage the community to inform a decision.



## **Early Education Access:**

Collaborated with Town and Community Action/Head Start to develop models to increase access to early childhood education.

Will complete a facilities review and full report in 2021.

# WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!

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Questions?

Amherst School Committee  
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Dr. Michael Morris  
[morrism@arps.org](mailto:morrism@arps.org)